

WINGED VICTORY

My best friend has named his new royal purple pickup truck "Winged Victory." He's attached feathered flappers to both doors, and blazoned the name on his windshield, tailgate, and roof (for the benefit of planes and high-rise dwellers). No one can help noticing. And though some are put off, many are impressed. His act is called "a bold imaginative leap." It's said to evidence "the spirit to soar above the crowd," "the guts and skill to hammer dreams into reality," etc.

Women seem to sense a directly proportional relation between these qualities and excellence in bed. So Hojo is now besieged by gorgeous women, including my wife, who used to call him "a gesticulating nurd," but yesterday cleaned out our joint checking account and presented him with the lump sum, "to spur his creativity."

I used to be the creative one, the undiscovered genius. Winged Victory was my idea -- one of thousands of original jokes, comic anecdotes, and nutty ideas I've spewed out to amuse Hojo, who used to be paranoid, gloomy, and ashamed of his small penis.

Although he's barely five feet tall -- I'm a lusty six-three -- he signed today to play Hercules in a new movie series, at one million bucks per picture. He intends to play out his contract, then study Shakespearean acting in England while writing his memoirs. "The sky," he says, "is the limit."

It's hard not to be bitter.

JUST PASSING THROUGH, WEEB HITS RENO, NEVADA

He swears he's immune, but already
grappling hooks snag in his irises,
gambling fever pulls itself
expertly into his brain.
Slot machines flash "Come'ere sweetie."
Cards, dice, roulette wheels
scream ultrasonic commands.
He homes in, even
as he tells the guy beside him
"Look at all these suckers."
He's clutching his first buck.
What the hell? It's just for fun.
Bells clang. Buzzers roar.
People squeal and swear.
Jackpots clank in all pockets but his.
He's due for a lucky streak.

Aces, cherries spin in his eyes.
Half-nude girls bring him free booze.
3 7's PAYS SUPER JACKPOT!
BREAK THE BANK! JACKPOT EXPRESS!
25,000 DOLLAR KENO!
A DIME MAY WIN THIS CAR!
Poor men have walked out millionaires!

He throws off caution like a suit
he never liked, but was too cheap to ditch
before.

LONG DISTANCE, 8 A.M.

She's home, she misses me! My fears
shatter like gargoyle piñatas.
I dance away to the cheated
pay-phone's frantic jangle,
nearly smash into a squat,
broad-faced hippy girl.

A baby peeks from her back-pack,
its face purple as a bruise.
"What a fine child. What's its name?"
I beam. "Placenta," she beams back.
"How pretty. Did you think of it?"
"No, the doctor did."

"Well, it does him credit.
Does you credit. Her credit.
The planet credit!"
And I stride away delighted,
smug as Superman finally
getting blown by Lois Lane.

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

A gob of Wheaties drops off my spoon
and splats on the kitchen floor.
I scoop it up and, without thinking,
toss it over my shoulder
toward the garbage sack.

Smack, carom, bang --
off the wall and into last night's
potatoes and broccoli.